



# Rhode Island Success Story

## Brewed Awakenings Coffee House

Whether touring historic Providence, meeting business associates, friends, or stopping on the way to work, Brewed Awakenings Coffee House has something for everyone. Brewed Awakenings is located in the heart of Downtown Providence, in Union Station Plaza, and is surrounded by some of the city's finest hotels, restaurants, and shopping centers.

Brewed Awakenings offers a casual, yet elegant surrounding, soft leather chairs, computer work stations with Internet access, and an extensive menu that features 14 varieties of gourmet coffee, espresso, cappuccino, latte, and chai. They offer fresh baked muffins, bagels and Danish along with biscotti, cookies and fine cakes.

It's not unusual to see students enjoying a fresh brewed cup of coffee while researching a project on line. Often business owners will take a break for coffee and use the work station to check e-mail or to submit customer orders.

David Levesque started the original Brewed Awakenings on Atwood Avenue in Johnston seven years ago as an extension of Levesque's wholesale coffee business. The coffee shop had just four seats and a counter. Word quickly spread about the delicious coffee and soon customers were filling the 2,000 square foot shop.

David's entrepreneurial journey began at Johnson & Wales University where he managed the University's vending machines and supervised three employees. Vending machine sales totaled \$380,000 annually.

In 1991, Levesque started his wholesale coffee distribution business, East Coast Coffee Company. David expanded his business by opening a small gift store, Bella Baskets, in Johnston.

By 1996, David had teamed up with a competing company to form Ocean Coast Beverage Company. He decided to focus his attention solely on the wholesale coffee business and closed Bella Baskets in 2000. Ocean Coast Beverage Company was very successful, and David decided to venture into the retail coffee business with the opening of the first Brewed Awakenings shop in 1996.

Brewed Awakenings started slow and steadily built a customer base. David knew his concept for a coffee house would be successful in the right location and dreamed of expansion into other locations. Levesque knew that downtown Providence would have the most potential for success. The shop's customer base consists of commuters, business people, local residents and students.



**David J. Levesque, President,  
Brewed Awakenings Coffee House**

In June 2000, David discovered what he considered to be an ideal location for the second Brewed Awakenings, Union Station Plaza on Memorial Boulevard in Waterplace Park.

By January 2001, David sold his interest in the Ocean Coast Coffee Company and used the proceeds to help fund the downtown Providence project. He needed more capital, and he turned to Fleet Bank, which provided an SBA-backed loan. The Providence Economic Development Corporation also provided financing.

David took an active part in constructing the coffee house. He built the tables himself and brought in friends and relatives to help with everything from the counters to the plumbing.

In July 2001, after six months of hard work, the second Brewed Awakenings held its grand opening.

The coffee house is designed in wood and earth tones to create a cozy, warm atmosphere. At any time, you may find customers relaxing on a couch, quietly reading a book, or having a business meeting over coffee and bagels. During the morning "rush hours" the take out line is always steady. The coffee shop was recently issued a liquor license, which should increase the evening customer base. Table service will also be introduced and an expanded line of pastries is also planned in 2003.

Brewed Awakenings seats over 100 persons. The company employs a staff of 14 downtown and 15 at the Johnston location.

Brewed Awakenings is open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekdays and until midnight on weekends and for special events.

With its beautiful detailed wood craftsmanship and leather couches, there is no doubt that the downtown Providence Brewed Awakenings is one of the most elegant coffee houses in New England. It is also making a major contribution to the renaissance of Providence.